



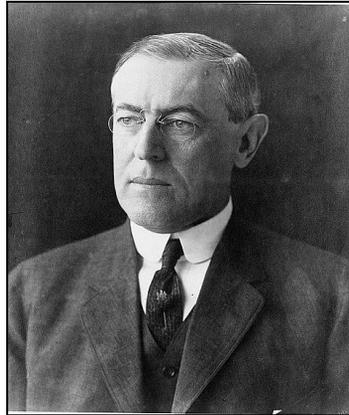
Woodrow Wilson Still Fuels Debate on ‘Who Lost Russia?’

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Abstract: This article wrestles with the question: could there have been something in the Woodrow Wilson presidency that remains germane to the continuing debate about whether the United States and its Western allies “lost” Russia following the ending of the Cold War and disappearance of the Soviet Union?



Woodrow Wilson (Photo: Library of Congress)

The controversy over Woodrow Wilson's well-documented racism¹ has obscured the fact that Wilson's *foreign policy* agenda remains central to contemporary debates about international security. Certainly the impending centenary of the president's historic decision to ask Congress to declare war on Imperial Germany in April 1917 will lead scholars to revisit Wilsonian diplomacy as it

¹ “The Case Against Woodrow Wilson,” *New York Times*, Nov. 25, 2015, p. A26; Alexandra Markovich, “Wilson Name Will Be Kept at Princeton,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2016, p. A23.

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related to his decision to intervene in World War I. But the *current* foreign-policy controversy involving Wilson dwells upon a different set of questions on the issue of America's relations with Russia today.

The question is: could there be *something* in the Woodrow Wilson presidency itself that remains germane to the continuing debate about whether the United States and its Western allies “lost” Russia following the ending of the Cold War and disappearance of the Soviet Union? Is there a theoretical or policy link that connects a long-dead Woodrow Wilson to a Vladimir Putin, who remains very much alive and kicking?

Obviously, Wilson cannot be as directly implicated in this current foreign-policy debate as in the domestic one over race. Some “revisionist” writers, however, have sought to do just this, by insisting that the opening acts of the Cold War took place during the Wilson Administration, and stemmed from the President’s decision to send troops to revolution-wracked Russia.² In the revisionist reading, there is a direct line connecting Woodrow Wilson to the contemporary state of U.S.-Russia relations, with the 1918 intervention constituting the original sin for which expiation has never been possible. This perspective holds Wilson “responsible” for Putin to a certain extent. Now, this is not the only connection between the two leaders that will be probed in this article, and not only because the revisionist argument fundamentally misconstrues the U.S. intervention in Russia’s internecine conflict of a century ago.³ Instead, the connection between the former American leader and the current Russian one resides elsewhere than in fusty arguments about who started the Cold War. If found at all, it is in a decidedly *post*-Cold War set of assumptions and deeds—all considered somehow to be derived from, and testimony to, an enduring “Wilsonian” tradition in both U.S. foreign policy and International Relations (IR) theory. Wilson the *individual* may be neither here nor there regarding contemporary Russian-American relations; but *Wilsonianism*, many contend, does play a central role in this contemporary diplomatic saga.

² For that claim, see especially Arno J. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919* (New York: Knopf, 1967); and N. Gordon Levin, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968). See Alan L. Seltzer, “Woodrow Wilson as ‘Corporate-Liberal’: Toward a Reconsideration of Left Revisionist Historiography,” *Western Political Quarterly*, June 1977, pp. 183-211.

³ For a persuasive rebuttal of the revisionist contention, see J. Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), especially pp. 156-57, where the decision to intervene in Russia is depicted as being taken *not* out of fear of Bolshevism, but rather of *Kaiserism*. “The scenario that haunted the Allies and impelled them to action *was* a ghostly premonition of the future. But what was on their mind was not the spectre of revolution or an anticipation of the Cold War, but a foretaste of the summer of 1941 when the military triumphs of the *Wehrmacht* threatened to extend Hitler’s slave empire throughout Eurasia.”

The Ongoing Debate over Wilsonianism

After the Cold War’s end, NATO agreed at its 1994 Brussels summit to invite former members of the Warsaw Pact to join the Atlantic Alliance. This remains a project many regard as being profoundly “Wilsonian” in its inspiration and operation, an interpretation this article echoes, if only in a qualified sense.⁴

Although more than 20 years have passed since that Brussels summit, the debate continues over the decision made in the Belgian capital. That the alliance’s membership has increased from 16 at the time of the Cold War’s end to today’s 28 has not quieted the criticism of those who, agreeing with George F. Kennan, comprehend NATO’s expansion as a mistake of tragic proportions, largely because of what it portended for the future relationship of Russia with the West.⁵ Countering this claim are those who insist that the past two decades have corroborated the wisdom of the enlargement decision, which they see as having led to a bigger and better NATO, as well as to a more peaceful and democratic Europe.

The Ukraine crisis that flared up in early 2014, with Russia’s annexation of Crimea, highlights the stakes of this debate. For those in the Kennan camp, the bitter fruit of expansion has been harvested mostly, even if not exclusively, on Ukrainian soil. Presumably, had NATO not expanded toward the very borders of Russia,⁶ relations between the erstwhile Cold War adversaries would have evolved in a more cooperative way. Accordingly, strained relations with Russia are primarily the fault of the West.

This article examines the post-Cold War relationship between Russia and the West through the prism of what Mary N. Hampton has called, the “Wilsonian

⁴ On the enlargement decision, see Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); and James M. Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999).

⁵ In his own words, enlargement was the “most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era,” George F. Kennan, “A Fateful Blunder,” *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 1997, p. A23. For a similar argument warning against the danger of excluding Russia from the emerging post-Cold War order, see James Chace, “Managing? Russia’s Decline,” *World Policy Journal*, Spring 1996, pp. 125-27. More recently, see John J. Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin,” *Foreign Affairs*, Sept./Oct. 2014, pp. 77-89.

⁶ This view sometimes takes the form of the “encirclement” thesis, but it overlooks two aspects of geostrategic importance, namely that the alliance from its birth in 1949 has been near and even *on* Russia’s very borders, not only because of the contiguity of Norway and Russia, but also due to the proximity of the North American members of NATO (Canada and the United States) to Russia. The territorial and maritime claims of Canada in the Arctic come very close to overlapping with some of Russia’s own such claims, while Alaska is separated by only a very narrow stretch of water (the Bering Strait) from Russia’s continental landmass. In sum, if Russia today truly is “encircled,” then it owes more to NATO’s *birth* than to its ensuing enlargement. See, for the longer view of the encirclement trope, Kirk Bennett, “Russia’s Encirclement Obsession,” *American Interest*, March/April 2016, pp. 59-63.

impulse” and the “Versailles remedial.”⁷ Predicating the analysis upon theoretical understandings of a Wilsonianism⁸ cloaked in the raiment of “cooperative security” allows for identifying factors often considered of the greatest relevance in explaining the collapse of Russia-West cooperation over the past quarter-century. Ronald Steel draws a related link between two postwar orders, those following the First and Second World Wars, and a third “postwar” order—the one of central importance:

In the years since 1989, as in the years following 1919 and 1945, rhetoric and hope have conflicted with passions and reality. Euphoria has been followed by disillusion and resignation. Was it the hopes that were romantically exaggerated? Was it the execution that was faulty? Or were the principles flawed?⁹

These are all good questions, especially the last one. First, however, it is necessary to begin with a conceptual analysis of Wilsonianism, in a bid to determine what, exactly, the defining principles of this “paradigm” in U.S. foreign policy analysis and IR theory are thought to be.¹⁰

Let us first recall that Wilsonianism’s meaning is contested, reflecting the ideological preferences of those who employ the term. At times, those preferences have manifested themselves along clear party lines, with Wilsonianism during the first half of the twentieth century regarded as a Democratic foreign policy approach. The starkest display of this partisanship was the debate concerning America’s possible membership in the League of Nations, which Republicans vociferously opposed.¹¹ Over time, the party lines would blur to such an extent that ever since the end of

⁷ See her seminal article, “NATO at the Creation: U.S. Foreign Policy, West Germany and the Wilsonian Impulse,” *Security Studies*, Spring 1995, pp. 610-56, as well as her subsequent book, *The Wilsonian Impulse: U.S. Foreign Policy, the Alliance, and German Unification* (New York: Praeger, 1996).

⁸ For a useful introduction, see G. John Ikenberry, Thomas J. Knock, Anne-Marie Slaughter, and Tony Smith, *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁹ Ronald Steel, “Prologue: 1919-1945-1989,” in Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman, and Elisabeth Glaser, eds., *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment After 75 Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 21-34.

¹⁰ As one writer so suggestively puts it, Wilsonianism even predates Wilson himself, being one of the four paradigms that have given shape to American foreign policy ever since the earliest days of the Republic; the other three are Hamiltonianism, Jeffersonianism, and Jacksonianism. See Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

¹¹ See David Mervin, “Henry Cabot Lodge and the League of Nations,” *Journal of American Studies*, Feb. 1971, pp. 201-214; and James E. Hewes, Jr., “Henry Cabot Lodge and the League of Nations,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Aug. 20, 1970, pp. 245-255. Also see, John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Leroy G. Dorsey, “Woodrow Wilson’s Fight for the League of Nations: A Reexamination,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, Spring 1999, pp. 107-135; and Lloyd E. Ambrosius, “Woodrow Wilson, Alliances, and the League of Nations,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, April 2006, pp. 139-165.

World War II, the GOP featured its own “Wilsonians.” Indeed, some analysts have claimed that George W. Bush is the most Wilsonian president since Wilson himself.¹²

A second source of contestation is more epistemological than ideological, for example, the objections launched against Wilson and all his works by E.H. Carr, one of the founding figures of realism, whose *Twenty Years’ Crisis* made the case against a feckless, indeed “utopian,” policy dispensation predicated upon an erroneous reading of recent political realities fortified by an equally misplaced confidence in a fallacious “doctrine of the harmony of interests.”¹³ After Carr’s time, the era of the so-called first great debate in IR theory, it became a fairly common pattern for realists, whether “classical,” “neo-classical,” or “structural,” to express a disdain for Wilsonianism, as representing a misguided departure from “rational” or interest-based policymaking.¹⁴

Yet a third source of debate arises from the policy consequences of whatever are considered Wilsonianism’s core principles. Not surprisingly, when the “lessons” of history get revised and re-revised through an unavoidably “presentist” (some say, “Whiggish”) employment of the past,¹⁵ Wilsonianism’s fortunes must wax and wane, reflecting a fluctuating cost-benefit ethical calculus: what works must *a priori* be good, what fails must be bad. From its initial highpoint, during the first few months following the Armistice, when it seemed that Wilson could walk on water and that his policy ideas were the only ones that made any sense in a confused world, the President’s reputation and that of his foreign policy prescriptions plummeted swiftly, spiraling downward *pari passu* the burgeoning disillusionment, at home and abroad, with the postwar settlement.¹⁶

But those lessons of interwar revisionist historiography would find themselves being revised and annulled during World War II, when it was rare to encounter dissent from the proposition that Wilson had been right all along, and that

¹² An argument made, by Tony Smith, “Wilsonianism after Iraq: The End of Liberal Internationalism?” in *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy*, pp. 53-88; and John J. Tierney, Jr., “For America, ‘The War to End War’ Was Just the Beginning,” *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Fall/Winter 2014, pp. 219-29. For a strenuous denial that George W. Bush was a Wilsonian, see Peter Beinart, “Balancing Act: The Other Wilsonianism,” *World Affairs*, Summer 2008, pp. 76-88.

¹³ E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1946).

¹⁴ See Brian C. Schmidt, “Anarchy, World Politics and the Birth of a Discipline: American International Relations, Pluralist Theory and the Myth of Interwar Idealism,” *International Relations*, April 2002, pp. 9-31; and Lucian Ashworth, “Did the Realist-Idealist Great Debate Really Happen? A Revisionist History of International Relations,” *International Relations*, April 2002, pp. 33-51.

¹⁵ See Ernst Mayr, “When Is Historiography Whiggish?” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, April-June 1990, pp. 301-309.

¹⁶ Gene Smith, *When the Cheering Stopped: The Last Years of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: William Morrow, 1964). Also see, Selig Adler, “The War-Guilt Question and American Disillusionment, 1918-1928,” *Journal of Modern History*, March 1951, pp. 1-28; and Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America, 1919* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007).

he *should* have been heeded when he warned about the iniquitous consequences of an international system continuing to be characterized by the balance of power.¹⁷ Subsequently, with the outbreak of the Cold War and the inability of the United Nations to make much progress against the allegedly immutable realities of that balance-of-power system, a second period of disenchantment set in with Wilsonianism,¹⁸ resulting in a long realist slumber from which there was no awakening until the Cold War had drawn to an end.

With the surprise ending of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, Wilsonianism came back into favor among analysts and policy advocates alike, in Ronald Steel's words, getting "[d]usted off after decades of neglect and ridicule."¹⁹ Prominent among the many wielders of feather-dusters was such an inveterate anti-Wilsonian as George Kennan, now able to confess himself as being fond, after all, of the twenty-eighth President's policy wisdom.²⁰

Other realists joined in, if somewhat more cautiously than Kennan. Writing in the early 1990s, a decade when it was still possible to imagine that even Russia could be enfolded within the comforting geostrategic embrace of the U.S. and its allies,²¹ Robert W. Tucker observed that the climate rarely had been so propitious for erecting a "new international order" predicated upon the taming of the balance of power. Likewise, he added, "the prospects of a progressively more democratic world, one in which the demands of freedom are reconciled with the requirements of order, have never seemed more promising. These are the developments that presumably have vindicated Wilson's vision. Scoffed at and dismissed during much of the Cold War years by self-proclaimed realists, that vision is now seen as largely borne out at the close of the century."²² Coming from one of America's leading "self-proclaimed realists," Tucker's assessment might have seemed shocking, had he not injected a note of caution that the current Wilsonian mood might alter in the face of changing circumstances, as had happened with previous bursts of Wilsonian optimism.

We now know that Tucker's caution was well placed, for today's Wilsonians are more modest than those of the heady post-Cold War dawn. To be sure, even before the end of the 1990s, Cassandra-like voices warned against the will-o'-the-wisp of a Wilsonianism that, to critics such as Walter McDougall, had put its stamp on

¹⁷ Richard W. Leopold, "The Problem of American Intervention, 1917: An Historical Retrospect," *World Politics*, April 1950, pp. 405-425; Charles Seymour, "Woodrow Wilson in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs*, Jan. 1956, pp. 175-86.

¹⁸ Richard L. Watson, Jr., "Woodrow Wilson and His Interpreters, 1947-1957," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Sept. 1957, pp. 207-236.

¹⁹ Ronald Steel, "Mr. Fix-It," *New York Review of Books*, Oct. 5, 2000, <http://www.nybooks.com.proxy.queensu.ca/articles/archives/2000/oct/05/mr-fix-it/>.

²⁰ David Steigerwald, "Historiography: The Reclamation of Woodrow Wilson?" *Diplomatic History*, Winter 1999, pp. 79-99.

²¹ For an example, see James E. Goodby, *Europe Undivided: The New Logic of Peace in U.S.-Russian Relations* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, and Stanford: Institute for International Studies, 1998).

²² Robert W. Tucker, "The Triumph of Wilsonianism?" *World Policy Journal*, Winter 1993/94, pp. 83-99.

policy formulation of Bill Clinton’s Administration, chastised for being excessively concentrated on spreading democracy and not paying enough attention to the “national interest.” In the memorable simile of one such critic, America’s foreign policy under Clinton had become an aspect of “social work,” more befitting an altruist like Mother Teresa than a titan like Uncle Sam.²³

That critic, Michael Mandelbaum, may have erred in his assumption that Clintonian foreign policy *was* based on a rejection of the national interest, but he was correct to detect therein a Wilsonian leitmotif, something that some writers lampooned as being generative of “meliorism.”²⁴ All of this merely restates a point raised earlier: it is very far from self-evident exactly *what* Wilsonianism is supposed to connote, as a doctrinal source of inspiration, either in U.S. foreign policy or in IR writ large. For instance, it is often used interchangeably with the notion of “liberal internationalism,” which subsumes such concepts as collective security, democracy promotion, self-determination, multilateralism, cooperative security, and disarmament (to say nothing of meliorism).

Wilsonianism as Cooperative Security

Some students of Wilsonianism prefer to regard it as a series of logically sequential policy ideas, such that the whole ends up being more than the sum of its parts. Others, however, question the core tenets of Wilsonianism, when placed alongside other core tenets. In one scholar’s apt words, “[m]ischaracterizations of Wilson have proven sustainable because Wilsonianism itself is elusive and indeterminate. It destructs more readily than it constructs.”²⁵ Consider just one of the logical discrepancies that is characteristic of Wilsonianism: democracy promotion as self-determination. Obviously, they cannot always co-exist easily. Indeed, there is good reason to doubt that Wilson himself thought that self-determination would always lead to democracy—or even that it *must*.²⁶ A similar discordance shows up when we juxtapose two other items: collective security and disarmament. For as

²³ Michael Mandelbaum, “Foreign Policy as Social Work,” *Foreign Affairs*, Jan/Feb 1996, pp. 16-32.

²⁴ In particular, Walter A. McDougall, whose “bible” of American foreign policy traditions makes an effortless transition from the antecedent of Wilsonianism to the consequent of “global meliorism.” See his *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

²⁵ See Stephen Wertheim, “The Wilsonian Chimera: Why Debating Wilson’s Vision Hasn’t Saved American Foreign Relations,” *White House Studies*, 2011, pp. 343-359.

²⁶ See Michla Pomerance, “The United States and Self-Determination: Perspectives on the Wilsonian Conception,” *American Journal of International Law*, Jan. 1976, pp. 1-27; Allen Lynch, “Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of ‘National Self-Determination’: A Reconsideration,” *Review of International Studies* April 2002, pp. 419-36; and Trygve Throntveit, “The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination,” *Diplomatic History*, June 2011, pp. 445-81. The best book-length study remains Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Richard Betts has argued so persuasively, if one takes seriously the obligation of all members of a collective-security organization to respond vigorously, if need be with military means, to cases of interstate aggression, then it follows that the organization and its members must be endowed with enough offensive firepower to make it possible for them to dislodge an aggressor from its ill-gotten territorial gains. This, in short, means that disarmament really should not find much of a home in Wilsonianism.²⁷

This leads us to the most important defining characteristic of Wilsonianism, at least as the twenty-eighth president saw things: collective security. No one has parsed the concept of Wilsonianism as skillfully as John Thompson, who notes that among the numerous methods of categorizing it, two stand out from the rest: collective security and democracy promotion. For Thompson, the first of these represented Wilson's own vision; as for the second, it has become the default option for Wilson's latter-day admirers. "For Wilson himself," writes Thompson, "the establishment of a League of Nations, envisaged as a universal organization superseding more partial alliances and alignments, was clearly the overriding goal. [...] It was his association with the League of Nations ideal that kept Wilson's memory alive and powerful through the interwar period and the 1940s. Only in recent years has the promotion of democracy in the world come to be seen as the essence of 'Wilsonianism.'"²⁸

It is not difficult to understand the migration of Wilsonianism's "essence" from the one to the other policy goal; both the League of Nations and, more tellingly perhaps, the United Nations, failed to fulfill the role for which they had been invented, to foster collective security as properly understood. This is as an *alternative* to the balance of power, rather than as simply another way of expressing the notion of collective action on behalf of security organizations *rooted* in the balance of power, for instance by an alliance such as NATO.²⁹ To fail to come up with a replacement essence would have stripped Wilsonianism of most of its normative appeal, rendering it more of a historical relic than an ongoing policy inspiration, a curio along the lines, say, of the Olney Doctrine or other defunct corollaries of the Monroe Doctrine. Thus, it was no coincidence that Wilsonianism shifted away from collective security toward democracy promotion. As a result, another key understanding of Wilsonianism surfaced: cooperative security.

²⁷ Richard K. Betts, "Systems for Peace or Causes of War? Collective Security, Arms Control, and the New Europe," *International Security*, Summer 1992, pp. 5-43.

²⁸ John A. Thompson, "Wilsonianism: The Dynamics of a Conflicted Concept," *International Affairs*, Jan. 2010, pp. 27-47.

²⁹ See "A Hollow Superpower," *Economist*, March 19, 2016, p. 11. On why collective security should never be confused with collective defense, two sources remain essential reading, Inis L. Claude, Jr., "Collective Security as an Approach to Peace," in Claude, *From Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 353-64, and Roland N. Stromberg, "The Idea of Collective Security," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, April 1956, pp. 250-263.

Cooperative security is sometimes employed as a loose synonym for the vague category “multilateralism.”³⁰ In turn, this latter has sometimes been said by contemporary Wilsonians, such as Anne-Marie Slaughter, to represent the “true” nature of a modern-day Wilsonianism emphasizing the centrality of “common counsel.”³¹ All of this may be a tad *recherché*, given that Woodrow Wilson personally tended to rely, as time went on, upon the counsel of fewer and fewer people other than himself and his second wife, Edith.³² Nor does the irony dissipate much if taking guidance from public opinion is said to be the litmus test for “common counsel,” since Wilson was well-known for having great confidence in public opinion—but only so long as it agreed with him.³³

This said, obvious reasons remain for wanting to construe Wilsonianism in such a way as to apply it to the analysis of contemporary Russian-American relations. Admittedly, holding it synonymously with collective security does not help; nor does equating Wilsonianism with most of the other stipulated traits mentioned above advance understanding. Self-determination, if taken as a lodestar of Wilsonianism, would not have had much of an impact on U.S. ties with Russia between 1991 and the summer of 2008. As for disarmament, it is even more remotely associated with the trajectory of the bilateral relationship since the Soviet Union’s disappearance, because while arms-control initiatives were hardly an unknown feature of U.S.-Soviet relations prior to 1991, just as they have been evident in U.S.-Russia relations since 1991, there is no reason for thinking of them as particularly Wilsonian in inspiration—unless, of course, one wants to make every administration since Dwight Eisenhower’s day appear to be Wilsonian.

Multilateralism seems too insipid to be tasked with much explanatory significance. In any event, reliance upon it would violate Ockham’s razor. In fact, of the six denotative characteristics with which Wilsonianism might logically be associated, there really is only one that is apt for ascertaining whether something about the Wilsonian record deserves to be inserted into the discussion of contemporary Russian-American relations: the concept of cooperative security.

Both collective defense and cooperative security are employed erroneously as synonyms for collective security.³⁴ But cooperative security is not even very similar to that earlier idea, which as Thompson tells us, really *did* encapsulate Woodrow Wilson’s own understanding of the policy ideals that came to be associated with his name. For unlike collective security, whose very existence presupposes the radical

³⁰ See Lisa L. Martin, “Interests, Power, and Multilateralism,” *International Organization*, Autumn 1992, pp. 765-792.

³¹ Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century,” in *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy*, pp. 89-117.

³² Judith L. Weaver, “Edith Bolling Wilson as First Lady: A Study in the Power of Personality, 1919-1920,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Winter 1985, pp. 51-76.

³³ See Henry A. Turner, “Woodrow Wilson and Public Opinion,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Winter 1957-58, pp. 505-520.

³⁴ For one such erroneous conceptual melding, see Josef Joffe, “Collective Security and the Future of Europe: Failed Dreams and Dead Ends,” *Survival*, Spring 1992, pp. 36-50.

diminution—if not outright abolition—of “power politics,” as mediated through the balance-of-power system, cooperative security is an arrangement intended to work *within* the balance of power, relying especially upon an alliance, NATO, to effect its moderating influence. How, exactly, did cooperative security come to be imagined by some as the premier stabilizing mechanism in international security?

To answer this, let us look at how, following the Cold War's end, NATO sought to “transform” itself, to become ever more reliant upon the logic of cooperative security supplying the ideational basis for the alliance's continual existence, during an era that was so often characterized as a “threatless” one. It would be this selfsame logic of cooperative security that invested both the Versailles remedial and the Wilsonian impulse with whatever contemporary meaning they would assume. Thus, to the extent that either of these could be said to be applicable to the future of the relationship between Russia and the United States (as well as the rest of the West), they required being considered as logical corollaries of cooperative security.

It is easy to understand the felt need, both in NATO and in various allied countries, for an altered alliance after the Soviet Union's disappearance. For starters, the alliance's core mandate of collective defense could not help looking outdated with the demise of the great-power enemy against which NATO had been created. Given the absence of threat, it was no surprise that some NATO-watchers predicted that the alliance would soon follow its Cold War foe into oblivion. Its impending demise accounted, in turn, for a hefty measure of the alliance's bid to re-invent itself. This is because policymakers in important NATO precincts were aware of the historical record, one that showed that no alliance had ever proved capable of long outlasting the disappearance of the adversary that had brought about its existence, in the first place. Thus, to those who would reform (as in “transform”) NATO, the wager was that even were there no compelling need for collective defense, the alliance might still be saved from the scrap heap of history if it could be reinvented.

The existential quest for redemption via reinvention began even prior to the Soviet Union's demise, with the alliance's London summit of July 1990. This resulted in what, at the time, looked like an extraordinary declaration of intent to reach out to the recent adversaries of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and in so doing transform NATO from a predominantly military into an increasingly political organization. The new mandate would stress cooperation with, not containment of, the erstwhile “East.” At the Rome summit of November 1991, the alliance sought to give institutional meaning to the new cooperative thrust by creating the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), which held its inaugural meeting the following month.

Although the NACC tried to foster dialogue and cooperation with recent adversaries in the collapsing Warsaw pact, actually doing so proved difficult. It was not long before the NACC itself fell into desuetude. Reflecting this difficulty was the alliance's adoption of a “new strategic concept,” another outcome of the Rome summit. Perhaps the most important aspect of this document was its acceptance that the old Soviet threat had been replaced by “risks” described as being both “multi-faceted” and “multi-directional.” And while the drafters still saw a need for the alliance, they recognized that now NATO would have to “frame its strategy within a broad approach to security.” Two new security functions in particular were

highlighted—dialogue and crisis management.³⁵ These two functions came to define cooperative security.

As events transpired, these two proposed functions sparked considerable debate within NATO and elsewhere. Within six months of that meeting, the alliance embarked on a tentative journey into the world of peacekeeping. Alliance foreign ministers, meeting in early June 1992 in Oslo, and nervous about the galloping collapse of the Yugoslav state, announced their conditional willingness to assume peacekeeping assignments, on a case-by-case basis, under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (renamed in 1994 the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE). A year and a half later, dialogue was given firmer institutional meaning through the Partnership for Peace, a successor to the defunct NACC. These twin undertakings embroiled NATO in a new problem during the 1990s and beyond. Each in its own way provided gathering momentum for a new policy initiative with serious implications for Russia and the West’s relations over the subsequent two decades, down to the present: the enlargement of the alliance.

During the first three years of NATO’s transformative phase, there was little dictating that either dialogue or crisis management would require expanding the alliance beyond its Cold War membership of 16. Indeed, when the Partnership for Peace was announced by the U.S. Secretary of Defense Les Aspin at Travemünde, Germany in October 1993, and even when it was officially embraced by the alliance at the Brussels summit three months later, it was widely regarded as a means of putting off the issue of enlargement. More generally, there was nothing in the alliance’s initial transformative agenda that obliged it to decide to enlarge to the eastward.

Nevertheless, as NATO began to reposition itself in the European security order, particularly as it began to loom as an exporter of “stability” by expanding the liberal-democratic zone of peace, the gap separating its qualitative from its quantitative transformation narrowed appreciably. As a result, by the middle of the 1990s, NATO was regarded as a cooperative security organization, one characterized above all by an “inclusionary” ethic harkening back to the time of Woodrow Wilson. Some theorists began to claim that he had been the foremost champion of the policy wisdom of embracing recently defeated foes, thereby socializing them into a liberal, and America-friendly, order.

In this atmosphere, Mary Hampton and other “constructivist” international security theorists pondered what they considered the tragedy of the Versailles peace settlement following World War I: that Wilson’s advice was scorned both by his

³⁵ “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, Agreed by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Rome on 7-8 November 1991,” reproduced as Appendix IX, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1995), pp. 235-48. Also see Michel Fortmann, “NATO Defense Planning in a Post-CFE Environment: Assessing the Alliance Strategy Review (1990-1991),” in David G. Haglund and Olaf Mager, eds., *Homeward Bound?: Allied Forces in the New Germany* (Boulder: Westview, 1992), pp. 41-62.

fellow peacemakers (David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, and Vittorio Orlando) and, even worse, by his fellow Americans.³⁶ As a consequence, the world would come to regret the rejection of the president's vision. Fortunately, the next time it got the chance to heed his policy wisdom, there was a happier outcome, one for which the Versailles tragedy served as an invaluable remedial lesson for policymakers. Wilson may have been long dead, but his policy legacy remained more alive than ever following the Cold War. Or so some thought.

A Versailles Remedial for Russia?

Mark Twain's alleged aphorism is that history never repeats itself, but "rhymes" instead. Less familiar, however, is the notion of some social scientists known as the "availability heuristic,"³⁷ reflecting the need for policymakers (and others) to find useful analogies when they ponder how they are to respond to circumstances of enormous complexity, as in international security, and not just at moments of crisis. In sum, faced with mind-bogglingly difficult yet excruciatingly important choices to be made, decision makers rely upon cognitive crutches, under the rubric of the "lessons of history."³⁸ Particular recourse is made to the crutch provided by *analogy*, and though it is commonplace for scholars to warn against the hazards of "analogical reasoning," it is no less common for decision makers to resort to these instruments.³⁹ Both the "Versailles remedial" and the "Wilsonian impulse" are instances of such cognitive devices, the former invoked to provide a tutorial on how *not* to construct a post-conflict order, and the latter supplied as a compass for navigating an always uncertain future.

How do these two schemata relate to contemporary Russian-American relations? A great deal, *if* it can be assumed that there was something not done at (or following) the Versailles peace talks in early 1919 that Woodrow Wilson desperately wanted done. Additionally, the question of whether the President's inability to get his way had tragic implications for the short-term future of Europe and the world. Fortunately, this version continues, the mistake made after World War I—namely, the failure to include defeated Germany in postwar reconstruction and reconciliation projects—was not repeated after the second global conflagration. Following World War II, U.S. leaders passed the Versailles remedial with flying colors, obviating Europe's (and the world's) return to chaos.

³⁶ Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1963).

³⁷ The *locus classicus* in Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic, and Amos Tversky, eds., *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Also, see Michael S. Neiberg, "The 1914 Analogy at War," *Orbis*, Jan. 2014, pp. 486-99.

³⁸ Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

³⁹ Excellent sources on analogical reasoning and its pitfalls are Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); and Yaacov Y. I. Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

According to Mary Hampton, intelligent and consistent adherence to the ordering principles of the Wilsonian impulse facilitated Germany's transition from a two-time belligerent in the first half of the twentieth century to a fully rehabilitated democracy and member of the Western community of states by 1955. Hampton is not the only scholar to have highlighted mistakes made during the interwar years as having had a powerful influence upon the strategic socialization of Western policymakers. These policymakers, in those early World War II years, scanned the recent past for instruction about a future yet to unfold. Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen similarly has pointed to the failed peace of Versailles as constituting a new lesson regarding "how peace had to be made by transcending enmity and integrating the vanquished enemy into the European order." Most apropos was his citing of a 1944 statement from the American Committee on Post-War Programs advocating the "earliest possible integration of Germany into the community of peace-loving nations," a passage intended to highlight the significant (and tragic) impact the failed peace of Versailles had on the post-war treatment of defeated Germany.⁴⁰

Thinking about the recent past with its successful "binding" of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Western alliance,⁴¹ as well keeping an eye to its future relevance to relations between the U.S. and Russia, it was easy for analysts to imagine that what worked in one context and with one country (Germany) might also work with a different country (Russia). Interestingly, at a moment when many realist theorists were sounding pessimistic about NATO's ability to survive in the post-threat environment,⁴² many constructivists were making strong claims regarding the ongoing prospects of, and need for, NATO. Albeit, this was as an alliance known more for its cooperative-security, especially, inclusionary virtues, than for its collective-defense traits. Hampton, for one, suggested as much, in noting explicitly that the "logic of courting Russia now resembles that employed in the courtship of West Germany during the early 1950s."⁴³

Others took up the same theme, including constructivists, as well as some (classical) realists and more than a few policymakers. Looking back at the 1990s, Anne Clunan detected in early post-Cold War Russia quite a few Wilsonians, all eagerly awaiting their country's imminent inclusion within the Western community of states, and who understood that it was valid to compare "post-Soviet Russia to postwar Germany and Japan [. . .] as a newly minted member of the democratic club that had to earn its stripes."⁴⁴ Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler, and F. Stephen Larrabee writing in 1993, acknowledged the serious challenges facing former

⁴⁰ Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, "The History of a Lesson: Versailles, Munich and the Social Construction of the Past," *Review of International Studies*, Oct. 2003, pp. 499-519.

⁴¹ See Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁴² Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security*, Fall 1993, pp. 44-79.

⁴³ Hampton, "NATO at the Creation," p. 654.

⁴⁴ Anne L. Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 114.

Communist countries but believed that the situation was nevertheless retrievable through NATO reorganization and expansion. Though Wilsonianism was not mentioned specifically, their policy prescriptions harmonized with the Wilsonian ordering principles outlined by Hampton and others, not least being their statement that “if democratic change succeeds in Russia then there is no legitimate reason to exclude it from the Western community.”⁴⁵ This theme would be reprised nearly a decade later by former U.S. Secretary of State, James A. Baker III, who suggested that NATO “draw up a clear roadmap for expanding the alliance eastward to include not only the states of Central and Eastern Europe but also a democratic Russia,” and in so recommending he noted, more or less correctly, that NATO was, “in essence, a coalition of former adversaries.”⁴⁶

Today, we see the near-total dissipation of the earlier optimism regarding the ability of the “cooperative-security alliance”⁴⁷ to incorporate Russia within its ambit, if not as a NATO member then at least as a more than privileged interlocutor. This latter was intended to be accomplished first by the 1997 Founding Act and then, five years later, by the NATO-Russia Council.⁴⁸ Insofar as Russia’s leadership currently interprets matters, it has all been the United States and its allies’ fault. Analyzing Putin’s speech following the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, Michael Rywkin paraphrased the Kremlin’s position thusly: “Russia has been humiliated, lied to by the United States, and rejected by Europe.”⁴⁹ Reflecting this sentiment of being systematically “disrespected” by the West is Moscow-based analyst Mikhail Aleksandrov, who has made explicit reference to the Wilsonian era in denouncing the “same unjust Versailles peace arrangement, the same dismemberment of the German nation, the same discrimination of German communities in the newly-formed petty states, the same policy of the West around Germany. Only now instead of Germany there is Russia.”⁵⁰

What happened? And how does the downturn in relations between Russia and the West relate to the Wilsonian vision of cooperative security? The fundamental issue is, whether the downturn has resulted from the failure of U.S. and other Western policymakers to heed the Versailles remedial, or paradoxically, from their having heeded it too well?⁵¹ Surprisingly, it looks to be more the latter than the former; in other words, the “availability heuristic” of Versailles promised more than

⁴⁵ Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler and F. Stephen Larrabee, “Building a New NATO: A New Transatlantic Bargain,” *Foreign Affairs*, Sept./Oct. 1993, pp. 28-40.

⁴⁶ James A. Baker III, “Russia in NATO?” *Washington Quarterly*, March 2002, pp. 93-103.

⁴⁷ In the words of NATO’s then secretary general, the alliance had become dedicated to the “wider goal of building cooperative security throughout the Euro-Atlantic region.” Javier Solana, “Letter from the Secretary General,” *NATO Review*, Nov.-Dec. 1997, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Michael Rühle, “NATO Enlargement and Russia: Discerning Fact from Fiction,” *American Foreign Policy Interests*, July 2014, pp. 234-239.

⁴⁹ Michael Rywkin, “Russia: Mythology in the Service of Realpolitik,” *American Foreign Policy Interests*, May 2014, pp. 195-200.

⁵⁰ As cited in Paul Goble, “Putin’s Russia Now in the Same Position as Hitler’s Germany in 1939, Moscow Analyst Says,” *The Interpreter*, July 2, 2014, <http://www.interpretermag.com/putins-russia-now-in-same-position-as-hitlers-germany-in-1939-moscow-analyst-says/>.

⁵¹ Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939*.

it could logically deliver, and this because the analogy suggested in the heuristic was flawed. How so?

Consider the nature of the defeat Germany suffered in World War II: its cities were in ruins; its leaders were either in their graves, in cells, or hiding in Argentina; and its people were profoundly impoverished, spiritually and physically. Could it be that this “zero hour” of national existence, the famous *Stunde null* of May 8, 1945, marked such a qualitatively different experience from that suffered either by Imperial Germany in 1918 or the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 as to obviate *any* availability heuristic’s employment? The answer must be in the affirmative. True, there was at least one similarity to be found between the pair of “postwar” dispensations, 1919 and 1991: the Soviet Union after the Cold War *was* a bit like Germany at the end of World War I, in that it had not been territorially overrun and largely occupied. However, unlike the Kaiser’s Germany, which faced the certain peril of an invasion by 1919 spearheaded by an U.S. army swollen to nearly four million soldiers,⁵² no one menaced post-Soviet Russia with an invasion, much less any devastating military defeat. Neither did Russia have to dig itself out of the rubble, as Germany was forced to do, after 1945.

This accounts for John Ikenberry’s wry observation that “[i]n the years that followed the end of the Cold War, more than a few Russians remarked—only half-jokingly—that reform and reconstruction in the former Soviet Union would have been more successful if Russia had actually been invaded and defeated by the West.”⁵³ Less sardonically, Victor Israelyan observed that for Russia after 1991, there was no equivalent to what the Marshall Plan did for Germany after 1947; while there was, obviously, American aid proffered to Russia in the Cold War’s aftermath, it was but a fraction of the assistance that the United States supplied to Germany and other European countries following World War II.⁵⁴ With the end of the Great War in mind, Williamson Murray acknowledged that because Germany, however reluctantly, accepted the Armistice and chose not to prosecute the fighting until its inevitable end, there was an undeniable—and catastrophically lamentable—impact upon the country’s perceptions during the interwar period. Had the Germans endured the crushing defeat guaranteed if the conflict carried on into 1919, they would have been unable in the 1930s to “conclude that their country had not suffered military defeat, but rather had been ‘stabbed in the back’ by Socialists and Jews.”⁵⁵ So the first

⁵² When the Armistice was reached, the American Expeditionary Force was already more than two million strong, making it larger than the British forces in France. See David M. Esposito, *The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson: American Aims in World War I* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), p. 129.

⁵³ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 215.

⁵⁴ Victor Israelyan, “Russia at the Crossroads: Don’t Tease a Wounded Bear,” *Washington Quarterly*, March 1998, pp. 47-65.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Mark Grimsley, “What if . . . the Versailles Settlement Had Succeeded?” *World War II*, Jan.-Feb. 2014, pp. 75-76.

problem with the Versailles analogy, and hence the extrapolated remedial, inheres in its awkward contextual fit, either for the post-1945 or the post-1991 order.

The second demerit of the Versailles (and, therefore, Wilsonian) analogy concerns the impact of threat upon community—including alliance—formation.⁵⁶ Realists and constructivists often part company over the question of threat perception and alliance formation, but even constructivist writers, who maintain that NATO's chief objective was to include and rehabilitate Germany within a "security community" after World War II (realists would insist the primary objective was to contain the USSR), note how important was the presence of the Soviet threat for the attainment of this superordinate aim.⁵⁷ Thus, a triangular relationship or "romantic triangle,"⁵⁸ featuring West Germany and the United States on one side and the Soviet Union on the other, motivated the Atlantic allies' courtship of Germany, in turn causing the latter to seek good relations with the United States and fellow Western countries. Could a cognate threat have a similar impact upon community-building these days, with Russia finding itself courting—and being courted by—a West desirous of a rapprochement so as better to counter peril emanating, say, from terrorists or China, or both? Some analysts appear to think it might.

Yet there are reasons to doubt that the kind of threat supplied by the USSR in the Cold War years, which either "caused" the incorporation of West Germany into NATO, or mightily facilitated it, could be supplied today, either by Salafist jihadis or the Chinese, and in so doing, foster Russia's rapprochement with the United States. Still, stranger things have happened: who, after all, would have predicted in early 1945 that a decade hence, *Germany* would be an American ally? This is why scholars like Elena Kropatcheva caution that it is "too early" to tell whether China's rise might eventually seriously threaten either Russia or NATO, leading them to engage much more cooperatively in the interests of their own security, as happened with the former adversaries of World War II.⁵⁹

Yet, it cannot be denied that al Qaeda's attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 9/11, as well as terrorist attacks in Moscow and St. Petersburg the following year, led to greater cooperation between Russia and NATO on various counterterrorism initiatives.⁶⁰ Though these and subsequent terrorist attacks occasionally facilitated a closer working relationship, uncertainty remains whether the "vague multi-location and unexpected character of the threat"⁶¹ will bring Russia and

⁵⁶ David G. Haglund, "The Case of the Missing Democratic Alliance: France, the 'Anglo-Saxons' and NATO's Deep Origins," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Aug. 2004, pp. 225-251.

⁵⁷ Thomas Risse, *Cooperation among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁵⁸ Mark R. Brawley's term used in reviewing Hampton's book in *American Political Science Review*, Sept. 1997, pp. 780-781.

⁵⁹ Elena Kropatcheva, "NATO-Russia Relations and the Chinese Factor: An Ignored Variable," *Politics*, June 2014, pp. 149-160.

⁶⁰ Luca Ratti, "Back to the Future?: International Relations Theory and NATO-Russia Relations since the End of the Cold War," *International Journal*, Spring 2009, pp. 399-422.

⁶¹ Irina Kobrinskaya, "Russia in the Transforming International Security System: The Role of Russia in the Present International Security System," in Katlijn Malfliet and Francisca

NATO further together. The evidence so far from the Syrian conflict would suggest that being co-belligerents against a common terrorist foe is not likely to generate anything other than short-term, tactical, and ultimately Pickwickian “cooperation” between Russia and the United States. Therefore, while China may pose a more significant threat to both countries in the future, and terrorist attacks have indeed generated sporadic cooperation, neither threat is likely to be as influential as was the Soviet peril in facilitating tighter relations between alliance members and West Germany.

There is a final reason why caution is in order about applying the Versailles remedial to contemporary Russian relations with the U.S. and its allies. Democratization has failed palpably to take root in Russia—at least if we understand by democratization, the inculcation of *liberal-democratic* norms and values. While Germany was rehabilitated as a democratic state after 1945, Russia since 1991 has been unable to follow through with reforms. Under President Putin it has become even less democratic than it was under Boris Yeltsin. We may recall Yeltsin’s rousing speech to the U.S. Congress in 1992 where he said the “partnership and cooperation of the two largest democratic states in order to strengthen democracy, is a truly great goal.”⁶²

Yeltsin’s lofty rhetoric notwithstanding, there was little about Russia in 1992 that resembled liberal-democracy, with the country’s political system the victim of a debilitated civil society that “left excessive power in the hands of political elites and undercut the emergence of a stable and robust democracy.”⁶³ Some scholars would concur that Russia’s democratic experiment had failed even before it began—and that this happened well before NATO’s decision to enlarge, which is usually blamed for undermining the prospects for a liberal-democratic Russia. The sad fact is that Russia was drifting toward illiberalism and ethno-nationalism several years before NATO expansion.

Summing Up

So, did Western—and especially American—decision makers botch the relationship with Russia and, in so doing so, flunk the Wilson remedial the second time it was applied? Did American and other allied leaders, following the Cold War, spurn a recent foe who desired nothing so much as closer relations with them? And are they now paying the price for their ineptitude?

The evidence is mixed, and so too must be the answer. Some will say that it was more than American (and Western) incompetence that led to the deterioration in what had once been heralded as a promising relationship between Russia and the West: it was *betrayal*. In this version of events, it was not so much that there was

Scharpé, eds., *The Concept of Russia: Patterns for Political Development in the Russian Federation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), pp. 69-80.

⁶² Quoted in Israelyan, “Russia at the Crossroads,” p. 49.

⁶³ Graeme J. Gill and Roger D. Markwick, *Russia’s Stillborn Democracy?: From Gorbachev to Yeltsin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 251.

anything fundamentally ill-conceived in the Wilsonian geostrategic playbook, as it was in the blatant failure to apply it to real-world events.

Against this view, however, is that of John Mearsheimer, who agrees that the United States and its allies steered Russia in a negative direction, converting it from the cooperative partner it might otherwise have become into the suspicious foe that it now is. They did this, however, not out of ignorance of Wilsonian verities but because of subservience to Wilsonian “delusions.” They initially expanded the alliance without simultaneously bringing Russia into the tent. And then—even worse—they proclaimed in 2008 that Georgia and Ukraine “will become members of NATO.”⁶⁴ In so doing, they fed Russian fears of encirclement by repeatedly breaking promises that had earlier been made. Obviously, there is something to the Mearsheimer critique, even if it overstates what was allegedly imbedded in that NATO “promise”—i.e., not a pledge to eschew enlargement, rather a commitment to refrain from the permanent deployment of troops eastward of the territory of the united Germany.⁶⁵ But if there is some truth here, it relates in a most intriguing manner to the Versailles remedial.

This is because what was successful after World War II was not truly Wilsonian; and what was Wilsonian between 1945 and 1955 was not really successful. By this, two things are meant. First, to advert to the point made earlier by John Thompson, the Wilsonian vision was predicated upon the undoing of the balance of power, which entails at the very least the undoing of alliances, seen by Wilson as having been the structural “cause” of the Great War, as well of war in general. And while this article argues, that cooperative security became the modern-day vehicle for the Wilsonian impulse, it did so in a very non- and even *anti*-Wilsonian way, because it worked with and through the world’s premier military alliance, NATO. As such, this variant of Wilsonianism was bound to be pinchbeck—at least as Wilson himself would have understood things. Thus, his “remedial” really was not applied successfully in respect of Germany after 1945, because the building of the Western alliance and incorporation of Germany represented a retreat from the Wilsonian vision of 1919, not its fulfillment.

Nor was this all that was wrong with the remedial. Simply put, those who saw in Wilson the great “inclusionist” of Paris 1919 misunderstand how the President really viewed Germany in the months following the Armistice, while he was in France negotiating the peace with his fellow victors. It is true, as Ido Oren reminds us, that at one stage of his career, Woodrow Wilson had been quite an admirer of German political ways. This was during the prewar *Kaiserreich* years, from the last decade or so of the nineteenth century into the first of the twentieth century, when the future President was still laboring in the groves of academe, initially as scholar, then as administrator.⁶⁶ To be sure, he did not prefer the Germany of the 1890s and early 1900s to Great Britain, but he certainly found it to be a more congenial and

⁶⁴ Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault,” p. 79.

⁶⁵ Mary Elise Sarotte, “A Broken Promise? What the West Really Told Moscow About NATO Expansion,” *Foreign Affairs*, Sept./Oct. 2014, pp. 90-97.

⁶⁶ Henry W. Bragdon, *Woodrow Wilson: The Academic Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

progressive place than France and many other countries at the time—a place, moreover, from which the United States itself had much to learn.⁶⁷ His views, of course, would change during the war years—how could they not have? But it is simply incorrect to imagine that Wilson’s wartime animus was directed solely at the German state and not at the German “people.”

We often hear that Wilson admired the latter as much as he detested the former; but recent research gives us reason to believe that Wilson’s suspicions ran nearly as strongly against the Germans as they did against their Kaiser. Following Germany’s punitive separate peace with Russia, made at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, Wilson grew convinced of the German nation’s guilt as a whole. As a result, he easily brought himself to endorse such harsh, and *exclusionary*, postwar measures as barring Germany from membership in the new League of Nations, as well as blaming Germany for having started the war in the first place. After Brest-Litovsk the scales fell from Wilson’s eyes, as he began to realize, in the words of one historian, that “even the civilian opposition, if not most of the German people, had been inculcated with the spirit of militarism. [...] [H]e no longer exempted the German people from blame for the deeds of their rulers. On the contrary, he now believed that, in the final analysis, the German people themselves were behind German militarism.”⁶⁸ In sum, Wilson was unlikely to preach the immediate re-insertion of Germany into the postwar “comity of nations,” Kaiser or no Kaiser. Whatever else, he was no champion of inclusion of this recent adversary into the postwar order.

So much for the Versailles experience as it really was, rather than as it has been romanticized after the fact. But can we say that at least the logic behind the “remedial” was sound, even if predicated upon a portrait of the Wilsonian “impulse” with far too many warts to be pretty? Would it not have been better to bring Russia into the alliance fold post-1991? And, had this been done, would it not have changed the future course of Russian political culture, entrenching within the country such strong liberal-democratic norms that it would guarantee a future full of meaningful cooperation between Russia and the West?

Who can say? Yet, less facetiously, it has to be noted that there are means available to analysts who seek insight into a future we never had because we were not blessed with a different past. And while these closing paragraphs are not the place for a thorough venting on an epistemological matter of such importance,⁶⁹ those who

⁶⁷ See Ido Oren, *Our Enemies and US: America’s Rivalries and the Making of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); and “The Subjectivity of the ‘Democratic’ Peace: Changing U.S. Perceptions of Imperial Germany,” *International Security*, Fall 1995, pp. 147-184.

⁶⁸ Manfred F. Boemeke, “Woodrow Wilson’s Image of Germany, the War-Guilt Question, and the Treaty of Versailles,” in *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 Years*, pp. 603-614. Also, see Klaus Schwabe, “Woodrow Wilson and Germany’s Membership in the League of Nations, 1918-1919,” *Central European History*, March 1975, pp. 3-22; and *Woodrow Wilson, Revolutionary Germany, and Peacemaking, 1918-1919: Missionary Diplomacy and the Realities of Power*, trans. Rita and Robert Kimber (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

⁶⁹ Useful starting points for contemplating the value of counterfactuals in social scientific inquiry include Jack S. Levy, “Counterfactuals, Causal Inference, and Historical Analysis,”

are *convinced* that it was America and the West that pushed post-Cold War Russia into a stance of implacable opposition would benefit from remembering that their own argument is resolutely, albeit implicitly, a counterfactual one. For their argument boils down to a simple expression: “if x , then y ”—with the terms here representing the counterfactual antecedent of NATO non-enlargement (x), and the counterfactual consequent of Russian liberal democracy (y).

Anyone tempted to think that in the absence of NATO enlargement, Russia would have blossomed into a full-bore liberal democracy, can hardly be said to be a committed realist, if by the latter we assume some strong correspondence between theory and reality. Indeed, it could even be remarked of this “if x , then y ” thesis that it truly is, not unlike the Wilsonianism many of its proponents profess to condemn, utopian—and possibly even delusional.



Security Studies, July-Sept. 2015, pp. 378-402; and Daniel Nolan, “Why Historians (and Everyone Else) Should Care about Counterfactuals,” *Philosophical Studies*, March 2013, pp. 317-35. For an intriguing application of counterfactual epistemology to inquiry into the causes and consequences of the First World War, see Richard Ned Lebow, *Archduke Franz Ferdinand Lives!: A World without World War I* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).